



# DHS Matters!

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## 2006 Leadership Academy

From Lynn Subramanian

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Development

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DHS director Marianne Udow welcomed and congratulated the 24 newly selected members of 2006 Leadership Academy during a special luncheon in Lansing Dec. 14. Several members of DHS executive staff were present to meet and greet the new academy members. Executive staff members introduced themselves to the academy and shared tips on leadership. Several executive staff members are mentors for the academy including Udow and chief deputy director Laura Champagne.

In her address Udow said DHS continues leadership development in spite of the largest budget deficit the department has faced in 20 years. She said good leadership was an essential key to dealing with challenging times. Udow said leadership is not about title, position or reaching the next level but about inspiring others to achieve a mission. She emphasized that a leader's role is to make things better by changing things within their realm rather than looking for answers from outside. She challenged new academy members to dig deep and identify what we want to achieve for those we serve.



**2006 Leadership Academy members (standing back l-r) Pamela Callum-Bragg, Cormellon Dixon, Russell Gruber, Larry Boitnott, Gwendolyn Bibb, Ailene Buchtrup, Ian Broughton, Brian Millikin, Bob Lewis, George Noonan. Standing middle l-r: Lisa Stanton, Carol Kraklan, Michelle Siego, Jimmica Donald, Chris McBride, Olga Strahan, Leslie Fall, Cynthia Dishman, Dan Hausrath, Brant Wimbush. Seated front l-r: Karen Southgate, Linda Bridgforth, Monica Siegfried, Michael Ricci.**

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The Leadership Academy selects high potential candidates through a rigorous selection process and accelerates their development during the two-year program to prepare them for high-level leadership positions within the department. Employees at P-11 level and above are eligible to apply for the Leadership Academy. There were 148 applicants that submitted self-nominations for the 2006 academy; 79 went on to complete online assessments and written experience profiles and 52 candidates were selected for interviews. Executive staff made the final selection of 24

members based on candidate scores and taking into account organizational and geographic representation. The 2006 Leadership Academy started in December. Congratulations and a warm welcome to the members on their two-year journey to leadership excellence. To expand professional development opportunities to all staff, a Leadership Development Program (LDP) was recently introduced. LDP is an alternative to the Leadership Academy that prepares staff for supervisory positions. It is available for staff at any level in DHS who want to develop their leadership skills.

Members of the 2004 Leadership Academy graduated on Dec 12 after completing all the requirements of the two-year academy. 2004 graduates are [Renee Adorjan](#), [Howard Anthony](#), [Gary Aschim](#), [Sandra Bistoff](#), [Edward Brickner](#), [Wendy Campau](#), [Cynthia Chapman](#), [Jim Cochrane](#), [Vicki Dahl](#), [Brenda Edwards](#), [Kimberly Hahn](#), [Mary Hall-Thiam](#), [Greg Hill](#), [Tracie Kress](#), [Mary Lou Mahoney](#), [Kelly Morse](#), [Toni Prabucki](#), [Len Richards](#), [Linda Riffenburg](#), [Holly Roderick](#), [Dawn Rodriguez](#), [David Russell](#), [John Seeterlin](#) and [Brenda Will](#).

■ Employees can get more information on Leadership Academy at DHS-Net, Department Websites, Office of Professional Development, Leadership Development, Leadership Academy.

## Donations touch several community services in Kalamazoo County

From Ruth Yoshikawa, Personnel and Contracts  
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Kalamazoo County DHS employees support numerous community services in Kalamazoo through participation in “Casual for a Cause” days throughout the year. Over the last 12 months employees have donated to over 24 different agencies with the donations exceeding \$4,000.

Each November, department staff members nominate and then vote on area charitable causes to support. Then, each month, a few different days are designated as a Casual for a Cause day.

To participate, an employee donates a minimum of \$2 to dress casually for the day. All donations are then forwarded to the selected charity.

Some of the charities employees have donated to include Kalamazoo Community in Schools, Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, American Red Cross, Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Ujima, Walk for Warmth, Paws With A Cause, Animal Rescue, Loaves & Fishes and Cheff Center.



Above: Monroe County DHS gave out over 40 Christmas stockings filled with goodies, crafts, penguin masks, and safety materials to the children that came into the office the week before Christmas. Alexis and Andrew Kostyn (right), the children in a case, share in the bounty. [Polly Carroll](#), Monroe community resource coordinator, donated the stocking and filled with items purchased by DHS staff, volunteers, and a local group. The front desk also gave out family and children’s blankets made by MOPS – Mothers of Preschoolers – and the Monroe Seniors Center donated about 200 beautiful hand knitted hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves for children and adults of Monroe County.

## DHS-Taylor District helped others for the holidays

From Sue Tallman, Data Resource Analyst  
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Generous employees, successful fundraising, and community partner collaborations throughout the year enabled the Taylor District staff to help a number of families during the holiday season. Several district groups assisted this year:

- The Communications Committee donated funds to five local food pantries that provide emergency food assistance to our clients throughout the year.
- The Senior Committee assisted 29 of our neediest senior citizens by providing Meijer gift cards to allow them to purchase needed items.
- The Community Giving Committee sponsored eight new applicants, whose cases were not opened before the Christmas holiday, with Meijer Gift Cards to ensure food was on the table that special day. They also initiated the “Spread Some Cheer While They Are Here” campaign and asked staff to donate inexpensive toys to hand out to children visiting the office the week before Christmas.

Gifts poured in and Santa’s elves worked frantically to wrap and ready them for distribution. The initiative enabled us to provide gifts to 110 children that week. Although the items were not elaborate or expensive, seeing the joy on a child’s face as they opened their gift was priceless.

We also had successful collaborations with the following community partners:

- The Kerr Corporation of Romulus adopted five families for both the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. They also contributed a substantial supply of socks and underwear for distribution.
- Children’s Resource Network of New Boston provided holiday food baskets for six families. Individual donors assisted by providing food, sundry items, and gifts to two of our families.
- The city of Taylor provided gifts for 35 of “our” children residing in Taylor.
- The Church of Jesus Christ in Allen Park provided holiday food baskets and sundry items to nine families.

In total, more than \$6,000 was donated to assist our families during the months of November and December. This truly demonstrates the dedication and commitment of both the Taylor District staff and our community partners to help those in need in Wayne County Downriver communities.



## Christmas wishes come true for Oakland County kids

From Lynn Contreras, Community Resource Coordinator  
DHS-Oakland County, Bloomfield Hills

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Thanks to generous sponsors, many of the children in foster care in Oakland County opened up some pretty awesome presents Christmas morning! Each fall I recruit sponsors in the community to make sure these children aren't forgotten. Some of our sponsors were extremely generous this year; many were determined to make a child's wish come true. In our county, each foster care worker completes a "wish list" for all of the children on their case load and I match sponsors with the children.

Redico Management in Southfield sponsored 50 older youths and made personalized stockings for each youth filled with goodies and generous gift cards. North American Bancard of Troy blew us away with their sponsorship of 150 children. They made sure that each child had more than one gift to unwrap. One 12-year-old girl wanted a sewing machine and the employees at North American Bancard made sure that little girl got a brand new portable sewing machine. The wait staff at UNO's Chicago Grill in Northville also participated, giving at least three gifts per child and numerous gift cards. One lucky boy received a Red Wings winter jacket.

In addition to businesses, many individuals and families are sponsors. One family that stands out is the Schoebel family of Rochester Hills. They were incredibly generous to the children that they sponsored and really went out of their way to personalize the gifts. Many county staff members were also very generous with their sponsorships. Several businesses and churches made large donations; without their money donations we wouldn't have purchased all the gifts cards we needed.

### Shop with a hero

Held Dec. 13, this event was sponsored by the Meijer store in Royal Oak. It called for "heroes" – police officers, firefighters and paramedics, etc. – to pair with needy children from the area. Each child was given a \$100 gift card to purchase Christmas presents for themselves. The heroes shopped with the children for their gifts. The original request was for us to provide the store with the names of about 15 needy children. For this event I decided to include families receiving service through our CPS and prevention programs. **Katty Bedell**, prevention specialist, took charge and raised money to include 37 children. We also partnered with the Borg-Warner Transmission Company and their Christmas shopping event at Meijer in Auburn Hills. This event served 60 children and their families receiving services through our CPS and prevention programs. Each family received \$100 for their Christmas shopping. Meijer and Borg-Warner, DHS staff and others also donated generously for these events. Katty's hard work helped Christmas wishes come true for nearly 100 children and their families.



A hero and child shop together.



Above: DHS Central Office staff contributed more than 200 items to the 2006 Giving Tree, a holiday tradition organized by DHS Office of Performance Excellence. Staff contributed hats, scarves, gloves, mittens, socks, headbands, Beanie babies, stencils & pens, books, games, cards and other toys for children. **Julie Horn Alexander** and **Debi Cain** delivered them to family shelters in East Lansing, Lansing and Charlotte. Horn Alexander is director of DHS Office of Quality Assurance and Cain is director of M the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board.

### Reach for the stars

For the past decade eligibility specialist **Pam Mack** has conducted a toy drive that she calls "reach for the stars." This toy drive is for the needy children at her district. This year Pam collected 190 toys which were given to 87 different families.

Foster care staff at the Baldwin Road District hosted their annual foster-adoptive holiday party Dec. 15 where about 100 children participated. The party featured Rainbow the Clown and Santa made an appearance just as the party was winding down. The combination of crafts, face painting, games, food and gifts brought joy to everyone including adults. The spirit of the event would not have been possible without volunteers from DHS and outside individuals. DHS volunteers were **Megan Heethius, Stephanie Bruley, Darlene Brown-Crite, Kimberly Dobiesz, Dana Washington, Pamela Safronoff, Sue Wise, Adam Schultz, Catherine Walker, Marta Gracia-Young, David Patyi, Kathleen Banfield, Deborah Frye, Pamela Barckholtz, Katie Kidder Sheri Stanley, Pamela Truran** and **Mary Stand**.

A special thank you goes to **Arther, Marsha, Carrie, and Kimberly Dobiesz** who made the evening a family affair. Other volunteers from outside of the department included **Vanessa George, Kelly Kozowicz, Dan Safronoff, Glen and Diane Nelson, Chris Bruley** and **John Strand**. **Marsha Dobiesz** and **Vanessa George** have made this affair a yearly posting on their calendars. The annual event was organized by Oakland DHS foster home licensing staff members, **Dave Patyi** and **Mary Strand**, and their supervisor, **Kathleen Banfield**. Thanks to everyone for making Christmas 2006 so special for so many Oakland County children and families.

## Five new QuickKnowledge courses offered

From Janet Waterstradt

DHS Office of Professional Development

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The Office of Professional Development announces some new QuickKnowledge courses for DHS employees. They are:

**State of Michigan E-Mail Retention Training**, a course designed for use by Michigan public employees (state, local, and public college or university). It addresses record retention issues that affect all e-mail users.

**IT Security Awareness** will help you uphold the law, protect your personal finances, prevent the loss of confidential information – yours and that of all citizens of the state – and preserve the reputation of our state government.

**Developing Assertiveness** encourages you to maintain your rights and to support those of others as you communicate directly and specifically at home or in the workplace.

**Ethics in Business** will help you make ethical decisions such as these: you're having a party at home tonight and you need only a few pieces of paper for one of the games.

**Managing Projects** provide you with practical information to help you manage projects. These days much of your work is probably organized around projects. How do you know who should do what by when? How do you make sure it gets done? This will help.

The courses are available at no cost to all DHS employees. Each course takes about one hour to complete and can be done at the employee's convenience. To access courses from DHS-Net click on "Department Websites", "Office of Professional Development", "Learn It Now" and "QuickKnowledge courses".

**Date:** Jan. 5

**To:** Vitalija Thompson, Manager  
DHS Bureau of Accounting, Lansing  
Reconciliation & Recoupment Section

**Sub:** Jerri Driver

I am a social services specialist currently working as a foster care worker in Genesee County. I am writing to tell you about a situation I have been trying to deal with and about how wonderfully helpful your worker, Ms. Driver, was with regards to it.

I have two siblings that initially came in and were listed as IV-E eligible. Because of their severe issues, immediately upon entry into foster care, they had to be placed into residential placements. Unfortunately, the only place that would take them would only accept them if we paid them via County Child Care funds. Because of this, I did not run into problems until this residential placement closed down and the children had to be relocated. Upon replacement, both children were located into residential placements that would accept IV-E funding.


Try as I might, I was unable to get payments for either of these children. I spoke with my supervisor about this and she wasn't sure what the problem was either. She, in turn, gave me an email address for another person in Lansing and suggested I contact (that person). I did contact this person and this person (referred) me to Ms. Jerri Driver. Ms. Driver was kind, pleasant and extremely helpful. Ms. Driver helped me fix the funding problem and we were able to serve our providers properly. Not only was Ms. Driver immensely kind and helpful, but she also told me that I could feel free to call her any time I have a problem.

I wanted to contact you and notify you that you have a wonderful employee/human being working for you and she deserves to receive kudos for this.

**Kelly Clark-Huey**

Genesee DHS, Flint

■ *Jerri Driver is a departmental supervisor and supervises the Children's Foster Care Recoupment Unit, which is part of the DHS Bureau of Accounting Reconciliation and Recoupment Section where Vitalija Thompson is manager.*



Your letters,  
intercepted  
and otherwise

**DHS Matters!** is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services  
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